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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Appointment, reappointments made to Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

LANSING, Mich. – Gov. Rick Snyder today announced one appointment and three reappointments to the Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Housed within the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, the 13-member council advises the department on matters pertaining to deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing persons. A minimum of seven members must be deaf or hard of hearing.

“These individuals are outstanding choices for this council, and I look forward to their continued service to our state in these roles,” said Snyder.

### *Appointment:*

Renea Forrest, of Royal Oak, is project manager for the deaf and hard of hearing initiative at Henry Ford Health System, where she has worked since 2001. She is a registered nurse, and previously served four years as a paramedic. Forrest holds an associate degree in nursing from Henry Ford Community College. She will represent individuals knowledgeable in the field of deafness and replaces Amy Burton.

### *Reappointments:*

Patrick Baker, of West Bloomfield, is director of labor relations and government affairs for the Construction Association of Michigan. He previously held positions in the Michigan House of Representatives, Michigan Senate and the legal division of former Governor John Engler. Baker earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Franciscan University in Ohio, a master’s degree in Catechetics from Gannon University in Pennsylvania and a degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School. He will continue to represent deaf and hard of hearing persons.

Helen Boucher, of Brighton, is the interim executive director for the Flint-based Communication Access Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, where she has worked since 1992. Boucher previously served as a staff interpreter and manager of community interpreting. She also is an instructor for practicum students in Mott Community College’s interpreter training program. Boucher participated in Lansing Community College’s interpreter training program and completed an associate degree in general studies at Washtenaw Community College. She will continue to represent individuals knowledgeable in the field of deafness.

Melissa Whalen, of Ann Arbor, is owner of Ann Arbor Deaf Psychological Services LLC. She completed clinical training at the University of Michigan Institute for Human Adjustment, Women’s Center of Southeastern Michigan and the Eastern Michigan University Psychology Clinic, and brings nearly 10 years of teaching experience.

Whalen holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Smith College in Massachusetts, a master's degree in sign linguistics from La Trobe University in Australia, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Eastern Michigan University. She will continue to serve as the council's chair and represent deaf or hard of hearing persons.

Appointees will serve three-year terms that expire Jan. 18, 2016, and their appointments are not subject to the advice and consent of the Senate.

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